APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2178	

DATE MAILED: 10/06/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

-- *The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address* --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE <u>3</u> MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *13 December 2001*.

2a)☐ This action is **FINAL.**   2b)☒ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1-42* is/are pending in the application.

     4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1-42* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

     Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

     Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

     a)☐ All   b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

        1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

        2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

        3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

     * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.

4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.

5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)

6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1.   This action is responsive to communications: Original application filed 12/13/2001.

2.   Claims 1-42 are pending. Claims 1, 20 and 37 are independent claims.

Specification

3.   **The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities:**

Page 1 of the specification contains incomplete related application numbers and there

current status.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

4.   **35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:**

> Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 1-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is

directed to non-statutory subject matter.

(a) Claims 1-19 are non statutory data structures because they are descriptive materials

per se since the claim recited a window and fields in the window.

(b) Even if the data structure is functional, they must be embodied on a computer

readable medium.

For your reference, below is a section from MPEP 2105:

> (a) Functional Descriptive Material: "Data Structures" Representing Descriptive Material Per Se or Computer Programs Representing Computer Listings Per Se **Data structures not claimed as embodied in computer-readable media are descriptive material per se and are not statutory** because they are not capable of

causing functional change in the computer. See, e.g., Warmerdam, 33 F.3d at 1361, 31 USPQ2d at 1760 (claim to a data structure per se held nonstatutory). Such claimed data structures do not define any structural and functional interrelationships between the data structure and other claimed aspects of the invention, which permit the data structure's functionality to be realized. In contrast, a claimed computer-readable medium encoded with a data structure defines structural and functional interrelationships between the data structure and the computer software and hardware components which permit the data structure's functionality to be realized, and is thus statutory. Similarly, computer programs claimed as computer listings per se, i.e., the descriptions or expressions of the programs are not physical "things." They are neither computer components nor statutory processes, as they are not "acts" being performed. Such claimed computer programs do not define any structural and functional interrelationships between the computer program and other claimed elements of a computer, which permit the computer program's functionality to be realized. In contrast, a claimed computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program is a computer element, which defines structural and functional interrelationships between the computer program and the rest of the computer which permit the computer program's functionality to be realized, and is thus statutory. Accordingly, it is important to distinguish claims that define descriptive material per se from claims that define statutory inventions. Computer programs are often recited as part of a claim. Office personnel should determine whether the computer program is being claimed as part of an otherwise statutory manufacture or machine. In such a case, the claim remains statutory irrespective of the fact that a computer program is included in the claim. The same result occurs when a computer program is used in a computerized process where the computer executes the instructions set forth in the computer program. Only when the claimed invention taken as a whole is directed to a mere program listing, i.e., to only its description or expression, is it descriptive material per se and hence nonstatutory. Since a computer program is merely a set of instructions capable of being executed by a computer, the computer program itself is not a process and Office personnel should treat a claim for a computer program, without the computer-readable medium needed to realize the computer program's functionality, as nonstatutory functional descriptive material. When a computer program is claimed in a process where the computer is executing the computer program's instructions, Office personnel should treat the claim as a process claim. See paragraph IV.B.2 (b), below. When a computer program is recited in conjunction with a physical structure, such as a computer memory, Office personnel should treat the claim as a product claim. See paragraph IV.B.2 (a)

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5.   **The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:**

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

6.   **Claims 1, 2, 5-7, 9, 11, 14, 16, 17-21, 24, 26, 29- 31, 33, 36, 37 and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Comer et al. (herein after Comer) U.S. Patent No. 5,966,716 filed 7/14/1998.**

In regard to independent claim 1, Comer discloses *a window for the activity type containing a first field in which the user can identify the user-defined field to be operated on* (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6); *and one or more operation fields that, when the user has identified the user- defined field, the user may set to specify the operation* (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function).

In regard to dependent claim 2, Comer discloses *the identified user-defined field's values belong to one of a plurality of types* (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6, Col 6 Lines 48-51 and Col 7 Lines 28-30); *and the operation fields in the entry are determined by the type of the identified field's values.* (Comer Col 6 Lines 48-51, Col 8 Lines 25-32 and Col 7 Lines 28-30)

In regard to dependent claim 5, Comer discloses *the user may set the operation fields to specify a value and to specify that the value be assigned to the identified field.* (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6 and Col 2 Lines 46-62)

In regard to dependent claim 6, Comer discloses *the user may set the operation fields to specify an operation by which a new value for the identified field may be computed from a current value which is the identified field's value.* (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function) (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6 and Col 2 Lines 46-62)

In regard to dependent claim 7, Comer discloses *the identified field's value belongs to an ordered set of values* (Comer Col 3 Lines 43-47); *and the user may set the operation fields to specify an increment operation wherein the identified field's new value is a value that follows the identified field's current value in the ordered set of values.* (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function) (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6 and Col 2 Lines 46-62)

In regard to dependent claim 9, Comer discloses *the user may set the operation fields to specify a reference field which is another field in the record and a reference field operation by which a new value for the identified field may be computed from a current value of the reference field.* (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function, Abstract i.e. record and Col 10 Lines 14-18 i.e. reference)

In regard to dependent claim 11, Comer discloses *the reference field operation assigns the current value of the reference field to the identified field.* (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6, Col 6 Lines 48-51 and Col 7 Lines 28-30) (Comer Col 6 Lines 48-51, Col 8 Lines 25-32 and Col 7 Lines 28-30) (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function) (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6 and Col 2 Lines 46-62)

In regard to dependent claim 14, Comer discloses *one of the plurality of ways is days; and when days have been specified, the user may further set the action fields to specify whether the days will be computed as business days or calendar days.* (Comer Col 4 Lines 50-55 i.e. day)

In regard to dependent claim 16, Comer discloses *the identified field has a person value; and the user may set the operation fields to specify a role reference field from which a new person value for the identified field may be obtained, the role reference field referring to an ordered set of person values wherein one of the person values is a last- used person value and the role reference field obtaining the next person value following the last-used person value as the new person value for the identified field.* (Comer Figure 4)

In regard to dependent claim 17, Comer discloses *the user may further set the operation fields to specify a person reference field that has a person value, the identified field being set from the value of the person reference field.* (Comer Figure 4)

In regard to dependent claim 18, Comer discloses *another operation has been specified which assigns the person reference field a value from a role reference field; and operations which assign person fields values from roll reference fields are performed prior to other operations.* (Comer Figure 4)

In regard to dependent claim 19, Comer discloses *the user may further set the operation fields to directly specify a person value, the identified field being set from the directly-specified person value.* (Comer Figure 4)

In regard to dependent claim 20, Comer discloses *a server that has access to a database system and executes program code for the process control system* (Comer Abstract); *a table of process records in the database system, a process record indicating a current condition of a process being controlled by the system and certain ones of the process records including one or more user-defined fields; and a table of activity type records in the database system that define activities to be performed with regard to the process, at least one of the activity type records specifying an operation to be done on a particular user-defined field* (Comer Col 5 Lines 57-60, Col 6 Lines 48-51 and Col 7 Lines 1-15); *and a portion of the program code which is executed in conjunction with posting an activity defined by at the least one activity type record in the system, the activity being posted as performed with regard to a process represented by a given process record and the operation specified in the at least one activity type being done during execution of the portion of the program code.* (Comer Col 2 Lines 29-32, Col 4 Lines 23-34 and Col 7 Lines 21-29)

In regard to dependent claim 21, Comer discloses *a table of activity records in the database system, an activity being posted by making a record for the activity in the table of activity records.* (Comer Col 5 Lines 57-60, Col 6 Lines 48-51 and Col 7 Lines 1-15)

In regard to dependent claim 24, Comer discloses *the at least one activity type record defines an activity that is posted by a user of the process control system.* (Comer Col 2 Lines 24-32, Col 5 Lines 6-9 and Col 8 Lines 65-67)

In regard to dependent claim 26, Comer discloses *the user-defined fields include a person field whose value represents a person; and the operation sets the person field to a value, which represents a person responsible for posting the activity.* (Comer Figure 4)

In regard to dependent claim 29, Comer discloses *the specified operation is setting the particular user-defined field to a value.* (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6) (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function) (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6 and Col 2 Lines 46-62)

In regard to dependent claim 30, Comer discloses *the specified operation is computing a new value for the particular user-defined field from the user-defined field's present value.* (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6) (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function) (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6 and Col 2 Lines 46-62)

In regard to dependent claim 31, Comer discloses *the particular user-defined field's value belongs to an ordered set of values; and the specified operation is an increment operation wherein the particular user- defined field's new value is a value that follows the identified field's current value in the ordered set of values.* (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6) (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function) (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6 and Col 2 Lines 46-62)

In regard to dependent claim 33, Comer discloses *the specified operation computes a new value for the particular user-defined field using a value from a reference field, which is another field in the process record.* (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function, Abstract i.e. record and Col 10 Lines 14-18 i.e. reference)

In regard to dependent claim 36, Comer discloses *the reference field's values belong to an ordered set of person values wherein one of the person values is a last-used person value; and the specified operation sets the user-defined field to the next person following the last-used person value in the ordered set.* (Comer Figure 4)

In regard to dependent claim 37, Comer discloses *a server that has access to a database system and executes program code for the process control system* (Comer Abstract); *a table of process records in the database system, a process record indicating a current condition of a process being controlled by the system and certain ones of the process records including one or more user-defined fields; a table of activity type records in the database system that define activities to be performed with regard to the process; and a table of activity records in the database system, an activity being posted as performed for the process by making a record for the activity in the table of activity records* (Comer Col 5 Lines 57-60, Col 6 Lines 48-51 and Col 7 Lines 1-15), *a specification in at least one activity type record of an operation that sets a particular user-defined field to a value corresponding to a value of a field in an activity record ; and a first portion of the program code that is executed in conjunction with the posting of an activity of the type as performed for the process and does the operation with regard to the activity record made when the activity is posted, whereby the value of the field in the activity*

record made when the activity is posted is mapped onto the particular user-defined field. (Comer

Col 2 Lines 29-32, Col 4 Lines 23-34 and Col 7 Lines 21-29)

In regard to dependent claim 40, Comer discloses *the activity record includes a*

responsible person field that specifies the person who is responsible for performing the activity;

and the operation sets the particular user-defined field to a value corresponding to the value of

the responsible person field. (Comer Figure 4)

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all

obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

7.   **Claims 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 32, 34, 35, 38, 39, 41 and 42 are**

rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Comer et al. (herein after

Comer) as applied to claims 1, 20 and 37 in view of Greif et al. (herein after Greif) U.S.

Patent No. 5,371,675 filed 6/3/1992.

In regard to dependent claim 3, Comer discloses *the plurality of types include types*

whose values belong to ordered sets that are defined in the system in which the graphical user

interface is used (Comer Col 3 Lines 43-47), *and types whose values specify persons.* (Comer

Figure 4)

Comer does not specifically disclose *types whose values specify times.* However, Greif

mentions a time when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a time so the user can keep track of the time of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 4, Comer does not specifically disclose *the user may set the operation fields to specify that the identified field be set to a null value.* However, Greif mentions that a value can be set to null (Greif Col 36 Lines 65-67). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of setting a value to null, which would be beneficial to the user.

In regard to dependent claim 8, Comer does not specifically disclose *the identified field may have a null value when the activity is posted; and the user may set the operation fields to specify an action that is to be performed when the identified field has the null value and/or an action that is to be performed when the identified field does not have the null value.* However, Greif mentions that a value can be set to null (Greif Col 36 Lines 65-67). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of setting a value to null, which would be beneficial to the user.

In regard to dependent claim 10, Comer discloses *the user may set the operation fields to specify a first reference field and a first reference field operation that is to be performed* (Comer Col 2 Lines 38-45 and Col 4 Lines 56-60 i.e. function) (Comer Col 7 Lines 1-6 and Col 2 Lines 46-62)

Comer does not specifically disclose *the identified field may have a null value when the activity is posted; when the identified field has the null value and/or a second reference field and a second reference field operation that is to be performed when the identified field does not have*

the null value. However, Greif mentions that a value can be set to null or not (Greif Col 36 Lines 65-67). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of setting a value to null or not, which would be beneficial to the user.

In regard to dependent claim 12, Comer discloses *the identified field and the reference field have time values; and the user may further set the operation fields to specify an amount of time by which the reference field's current value is increased or decreased to compute the new value for the identified field.* However, Greif mentions a time when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a time so the user can keep track of the time of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 13, Comer does not specifically disclose *the user may further set the operation fields to specify the amount of time in one of a plurality of ways.* However, Greif mentions a time when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a time so the user can keep track of the time of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 15, Comer does not specifically disclose *one of the reference fields is a field whose value is always set to the current time.* However, Greif mentions a time when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a time so the user can keep track of the time of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 22, Comer discloses *at least one activity type record defines an activity that the process control system automatically posts with regard to a process represented by a process record.* (Comer Col 2 Lines 24-32, Col 5 Lines 6-9 and Col 8 Lines 65-67)

Comer does not specifically disclose returned by *a query* on the table of process records. However, Greif mentions a query (Greif Col 31 Lines 54-56). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of processing a query, which would be important in returning records to the table.

In regard to dependent claim 23, Comer discloses *the process control system automatically performs the query.* However, Greif mentions a query (Greif Col 31 Lines 54-56). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of processing a query, which would be important in returning records to the table.

In regard to dependent claim 25, Comer does not specifically disclose *the user-defined fields include a date-time field whose value represents a date and a time; and the operation sets the date-time field to a date and time at which the activity is posted.* However, Greif mentions a date and time when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a date and time so the user can keep track of the date and time of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 27, Comer discloses *at which the activity is posted and the person field to a value, which represents a person responsible for posting the activity* (Comer Figure 4).

Comer does not specifically disclose *the user-defined fields include a date-time field whose value represents a date and a time and a person field whose value represents a person; and the operation sets the date-time field to a date and time.* However, Greif mentions a date and time when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a date and time so the user can keep track of the date and time of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 28, Comer discloses *at least one of the activity type records that specifies an operation defines an activity that the process control system automatically posts with regard to a process represented by a record* (Comer Col 2 Lines 24-32, Col 5 Lines 6-9 and Col 8 Lines 65-67)

Comer does not specifically disclose *returned by a query on the table of process records and at least another of the activity type records that specifies an operation defines an activity that is posted by a user of the process control system.* However, Greif mentions a query (Greif Col 31 Lines 54-56). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of processing a query, which would be important in returning records to the table.

In regard to dependent claim 32, Comer does not specifically disclose *the particular user-defined field may have a null value or a non-null value; and what the specified operation*

does depends on whether the particular user-defined field has a null value. However, Greif mentions that a value can be set to null (Greif Col 36 Lines 65-67). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of setting a value to null, which would be beneficial to the user.

In regard to dependent claim 34, Comer does not specifically disclose *the particular user-defined field and the reference field have time-date values; and the specified operation computes a time-date value for the particular user-defined field using the time-date value of the reference field.* However, Greif mentions a date and time when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a date and time so the user can keep track of the date and time of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 35, Comer does not specifically disclose *the reference field's value is always set to the current time-date.* However, Greif mentions a date and time when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a date and time so the user can keep track of the date and time of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 38, Comer does not specifically disclose *a second portion of the program code which performs first queries on user-defined fields in the table of process records and separate second queries on the table of activity records, whereby a query of the first queries may return the value of the field in the activity record that was mapped onto the particular user-defined field.* However, Greif mentions a query (Greif Col 31 Lines 54-56). It

would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of processing a query, which would be important in returning records to the table.

In regard to dependent claim 39, Comer does not specifically disclose *the activity record includes a date performed field that specifies when the activity is posted as performed; and the operation sets the particular user-defined field to a value corresponding to the value of the date performed field.* However, Greif mentions a date when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a date so the user can keep track of the date of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 41, Comer discloses *the activity record includes a date performed field that specifies when the activity is posted as performed and a responsible person field that specifies the person who is responsible for performing the activity* (Comer Figure 4) *and a second particular user-defined field using the responsible person field to obtain a value that specifies the person who is responsible.*

Comer does not specifically disclose *and the operation sets a first particular user-defined field using the date performed field to obtain a value specifying the date performed.* However, Greif mentions a date when something takes place (Greif Col 34 Lines 45-55). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of supplying a date so the user can keep track of the date of occurrence.

In regard to dependent claim 42, Comer does not specifically disclose *the particular user-defined field may have a null value; and the specification of the operation specifies that the particular user-defined field be set only when the particular user-defined field has a null value.* However, Greif mentions that a value can be set to null (Greif Col 36 Lines 65-67). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply Greif to Comer, proving Comer the benefit of setting a value to null, which would be beneficial to the user.

Conclusion

8.　**The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.**

| Fisher et al. | U.S. Patent No. 5,969,705 | issued | 10/19/1999 |
| Stiles | U.S. Patent No. 6,011,560 | issued | 1/4/2000 |

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Londra C Burge whose telephone number is (571) 272-4122. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30am to 5:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Stephen Hong can be reached on (571) 272-4124. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Any response to this action should be mailed to:

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Washington, DC 20231

Or faxed to:
(703) 746-7239 (for formal communications intended for entry)

Or:
(703) 746-7240 (for informal or draft communications, please label "PROPOSED" or "DRAFT")

Or:
(703) 746-7238 (for after-final communications)

Hand-delivered responses should be brought to Crystal Park II, 2121 Crystal Drive,

Arlington, VA, Fourth Floor (Receptionist).

STEPHEN S. HONG
PRIMARY EXAMINER

Londra C Burge
9/24/04